

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

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USIA-15 IO-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 IGA-01 NIC-01

EB-07 MC-02 ACDA-10 ERDA-07 OES-05 AGR-10 /145 W

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R 131300Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7487

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY CACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 3523

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH UPI MARCH 11

1. PRIME MINISTER GANDHI DISCUSSED A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS BEARING ON INDIAN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY IN AN INTERVIEW GRANTED UPI IN NEW DELHI ON MARCH 11. ALTHOUGH EXTRACTS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL HERALD AND OTHER DELHI PAPERS MARCH 13, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER UPI PLANS TO PUBLISH THE FULL INTERVIEW IN THE U.S. FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER POSTS MRS. GANDHI MADE COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS IN ADDITION TO HER REMARKS ON UNCLASSIFIED

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ALLEGED CIA ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

(BEING REPORTED
SEPARATELY TO THE DEPARTMENT).

2. LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO -- MRS. GHANDI SAID

"WE ARE VERY MUCH CONCERNED" ABOUT THE LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO, NOT BECAUSE PAKISTAN HAS A FEW MORE ARMS BUT BECAUSE "IT ENCOURAGES A CERTAIN ATTITUDE IN PAKISTAN... IT ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE OR WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A CONFRONTATION WITH INDIA." SHE ADDED "BHUTTO HIMSELF HAS SAID SOMETHING ABOUT FIGHTING WITH INDIA FOR A THOUSAND YEARS." WITH RESPECT TO PREVIOUS U.S. ASSURANCES THAT ITS ARMS WOULD NOT BE USED AGAINST INDIA, SHE SAID "WE KNEW THAT IF THEY WERE TO BE USED AT ALL, THEY WOULD BE USED AGAINST US, PARTLY BECAUSE MR. KHRUSHCHEV...AND MR. CHOU EN-LAI... BOTH SAID THEY (THE PAKISTANIS) HAD ASSURED THEM THAT THEY WOULD NOT FIGHT THEM. SO THAT LEFT ONLY INDIA." MRS. GANDHI SAID FURTHER THAT SHE FEELS A STRONG PAKISTAN IS IN INDIA'S INTEREST, BECAUSE "WEAK NEIGHBORS" PROVIDE A FOOTHOLD FOR OTHER PEOPLE." MRS. GANDHI INDICATED THE U.S. DECISION TO LIFT THE EMBARGO CAME AS A SURPRISE. "SPECIALLY THE TIMING." IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION WHETHER SHE HAD CONSTRUED THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT THAT THE USG WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO AN ARMS RACE TO MEAN THE EMBARGO WOULD NOT BE LIFTED, MRS. GANDHI SAID "WE DID GET THAT IMPRESSION."

3. ON POSSIBLE INDIAN ARMS PURCHASE IN THE U.S. -- MRS. GANDHI SAID SHE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER INDIA WOULD CONSIDER PURCHASING ARMS FROM THE U.S. "THERE IS NO EMOTION ATTACHED" TO THE QUESTION OF THE SOURCE OF INDIA'S ARMS PURCHASES, "IT IS A QUESTION OF WHICH (ARMS OR POSSIBLY SUPPLIER) IS MORE USEFUL."

4. ON A NUCLEAR PAKISTAN -- THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT "WE ARE AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS FOR ANYBODY," INCLUDING PAKISTAN.

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5. ON AFGHANISTAN-- MRS. GANDHI DENIED IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION THAT THE QUESTION OF A MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY WITH

AFGHANISTAN "HAS CROPPED UP AT ALL ..." WHEN THE INTERVIEWER INDICATED THAT BHUTTO HAD RAISED THE POSSIBILITY RECENTLY, SHE SAID "IT IS THEY WHO ARE TERRORIZING AFGHANISTAN" AND CITED THE DOWNING OF A PAKISTANI HELICOPTER "WITH ALL KINDS OF MAPS" ON AFGHAN TERRITORY.

TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTION WHETHER INDIA WOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IF THERE WERE A WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, MRS. GANDHI ONLY NOTED THAT "WE DON'T HAVE ANY COMMON BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN. WE WOULD LIKE TO PREVENT ANY SITUATION ARISING."

6. ON RELATIONS WITH THE PRC

- AFTER TELLING THE UPI INTERVIEWER THAT "I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE CHINESE, SO I REALLY CAN'T COMMENT ON THEIR ATTITUDES," MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT "IN SPITE OF THEIR VERY STRONG PROPAGANDA AGAINST US ON VARIOUS ISSUES AND THEIR TAKING PAKISTAN'S

SIDE ON MOST THINGS, THE SITUATION IS BETTER THAN IT WAS SOME YEARS AGO." SHE SAID A MAJOR SETBACK

OCCURRED AT THE TIME OF THE BANGLADESH WAR, "BUT ON THE WHOLE THE SITUATION IS MORE RELAXED, BUT NOT BETTER THAN IT WAS

EARLER ON".ASKED ABOUT CHINESE STATEMENTS ON SIKKIM AND KASHMIR, THE PRIME MINISTER

SAID "THEY SEEM ODD TO US CONSIDERING WHAT THEY HAVE

DONE." SHE EXPLAINED THAT THE SITUATION IN SIKKIM "WAS JUST BUILDING UP" BEFORE INDIA ACTED, AND

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WHILE "WE COULD PERHAPS HAVE TRIED TO HOLD BACK THE (SIKKIMESE) PEOPLE, I THINK THAT WOULD ONLY HAVE LED TO A DIFFERENT TYPE OF EXPLOSION LATER ON." THE PRIME MINISTER NOTED THAT "NOBODY REACTED, IN THE UNITED

STATES AND CHINA" WHEN PAKISTAN "VERY QUIETLY SWALLOWED UP" HUNZA, WHICH SHOWED THAT "THEY HAVE JUST TWO DIFFERENT STANDARDS."

7. ON THE FEARS OF INDIA'S NEIGHBORS

- ASKED WHETHER THE NEPALESE KING HAD ANY REASON FOR PROPOSING THAT NEPAL BE TREATED AS A ZONE PEACE, MRS GANDHI SAID SAXBE

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 3523

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IN

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH UPI MARCH 11

THAT SHE DIDN'T THINK SO "EXCEPT THAT IT IS DIFFICULT
TO BE A VERY SMALL COUNTRY..WE THINK IT IS PRETTY
DIFFICULT TO BE A BIG COUNTRY. MOST OF OUR PROBLEMS
ARE DUE TO THAT." REPHRASING THE QUESTION, THE INTER-
VIEWER OBSERVED THERE IS SOME FEAR IN INDIA'S NEIGHBORS,
NEPAL AND SRI LANKA BY NAME, AND ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER
WHETHER INDIA HAD ANY "GIGANTIC EXPANSIONIST PLANS THAT

MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO LAY AWAKE AT NIGHT." MRS. GANDHI

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EXPLAINED THAT INDIA ALREADY HAS "MORE LAND AND MORE PEOPLE..ENOUGH FOR US TO MANAGE" AND DID NOT DESIRE TO HAVE ANY MORE OF EITHER. SHE ADDED THAT INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA ARE "MUCH BETTER NOW THAN THEY HAVE BEEN ANY TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE."

8. ON KASHMIR -- THE INTERVIEWER ASKED WHETHER THE KASHMIR PROBLEM WAS STILL OPEN FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AFTER "THE RECENT MOVES." MRS. GANDHI, AFTER RETORTING "WHAT WERE THE RECENT MOVES," NOTED THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER IN MAHARASHTRA AND KASHMIR HAD BOTH CHANGED BUT "WE CONSIDER IT PURELY AN INTERNAL PROBLEM WHO SHOULD BE THE CHIEF MINISTER." SHE DENIED THE CHANGE HAD ANY EFFECT ON THE SIMLA PROCESS. TO THE QUESTION "ARE YOU GOING TO RESPOND TO MR. BHUTTO'S PROTEST," SHE INDICATED ONLY THAT IT WAS AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND "WE NORMALLY REPLY." AS TO WHETHER INDIA WOULD CONSIDER A PLEBISCITE IN KASHMIR AT THIS TIME, MRS. GANDHI SAID THIS WAS "GETTING BACK TO SQUARE ONE." SHE THEN EXPLAINED:

QUOTE: WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS SPOKE OF PLEBISCITE, THEY GAVE VARIOUS CONDITIONS. PAKISTANI FORCES WERE TO HAVE LEFT AND SO ON. NONE OF THOSE THINGS HAPPENED AND THE ONLY THING THAT WAS CAUGHT HOLD OF WAS "PLEBISCITE." AT LEAST ON THIS SAID WE HAVE HAD ELECTIONS. THERE WAS NOTHING ON TH OTHER SIDE. HERE WE HAVE NOT ONLY ELECTIONS, BUT WE HAVE DISSENT, DEMONSTRATIONS AND MEETINGS AND SO ON. BUT ON THE OTHER SIDE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WAS ALLOWED AT ALL. AFTER THE WAR WHEN SOME PORTION, HAJI PIR, WAS GIVEN BACK, THE PEOPLE DID NOT WANT TO GO BACK. THEY SAID THEY HAD NO MEDICAL ATTENTION OR SCHOOL OR ANYTHING.SO, ALL THESE THINGS ARE THERE ON THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER. END QUOTE.

9. ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY -- MRS. GANDHI POINTED TO THE "VERY SEVERE MEASURES--FISCAL AND OTHERWISE" TAKEN BY HER GOVERNMENT LAST SUMMER TO CURB INFLATION. AS A RESULT INFLATION IS "NOT RISING" AND HAS "COME DOWN" AND THE ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS "IMPROVED VERY MUCH SINCE LAST YEAR." SHE ALSO OBSERVED THAT INDIA HAS HAD GOOD WINTER

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RAINS WHICH MEAN A GOOD WINTER CROP. ON TRADE WITH THE U.S. SHE EMPHASIZED THAT INDIA HAS BEEN A CASH

CUSTOMER IN FOOD PURCHASES, AND "IN FACT THERE IS
A NET FLOW OF RESOURCES TO THE U.S."

10. ON PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT TO INDIA-- AS A LAST QUESTION
THE UPI INTERVIEWER ASKED WHETHER PRESIDENT FORD WAS
COMING TO INDIA THIS YEAR. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED SIMPLY
"WELL WE WERE TOLD 'YES'."SAXBE

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